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A Plea To Return To New Testament Christianity

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LARIMORE and TANT
Fanning Yater Tant

In the 1890's the beloved T. B. Larimore held a six-months meeting at Sherman, Texas, and baptized something like 250 people. His prestige there and his influence were almost comparable to Paul's in Galatia at the time the Galatians "would have plucked out their eyes" and given them to the apostle.

Some months after the great Larimore meeting, the digressives moved into Sherman and literally swept the church off its feet. Of the people Larimore had baptized, something over 200 joined the digressive church. The loyal brethren, trying desperately to stem the tide sent for J. D. Tant, and worked up a debate between J. D. Tant and a leading digressive preacher of the day (we believe it was A. D. Rogers, but would have to check the records on that before saying for certain.) The debate attracted wide attention. Tant stayed in Sherman for nearly a month; he told this writer (his son) that he made more than 500 personal calls during the time he was there, talking with those who had gone astray, pleading with them to return to the truth, pointing out the error of digressionism. He made as many as six or eight calls on some families, staying in some places until three o'clock in the morning, reading the Bible, teaching, and praying with them.

When the time came that he had to leave all except about thirty of the 200 or more who went to the digressives had returned to the truth. Tant wrote Larimore that so great was the affection in which he was held in Sherman that it was his (Tant's) judgment that one simple statement from Larimore to the effect that he believed instrumental music in Christian worship to be sinful would be sufficient to cause the entire number of those still in digressionism to return to the church.

Brother Larimore replied that he had wept much over the divisions which were developing among his brethren, that he knew there were godly men and women on both sides of these questions, and that he had made up his mind "not to take sides" with either the one group or the other. He did not write the statement Tant had asked for.

Long before his death, however, Larimore realized that it was impossible to be "neutral" in a fight between truth and error. He did make the statement Tant had asked, and many, many others pleading with his brethren to remain true to the Book. He repented of his long years of indecision and "neutrality" and wrote Tant that he deeply regretted his unwillingness to declare himself during the Sherman crisis. He had made a grievous mistake, and he wished it were possible to repair the damage his silence had done. (GOSPEL GUARDIAN, 1955)

(Editor's Note: Brethren, it is just as impossible to be "neutral" today in the fight between truth and error as it was in the days of Larimore! Very few men did what brother Larimore had the courage to do - to publicly renounce the errors of the Christian church after his many years of indecision and "neutrality". There are men among us today who need to have the same courage and come back and stand for the truth for the rest of their lives!) D. Townsley